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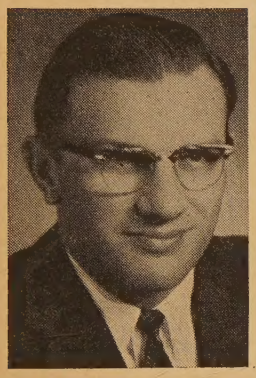
The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching



David B. Watermulder:
Learning from the World

David J. Maitland • Judgment in January
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J. N. KELLY
THE PERSON AND THE CHURCH

31-32
1960-61

VOL. XXXI, No. 1 JANUARY 1960

The Pulpit

Founded 1929 by Charles Clayton Morrison as a journal of contemporary preaching.

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35 cents single issue.
$4 a year in U.S.A. and Canada.
$4.50 foreign.

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Published monthly by the Christian Century Foundation, 407 S. Dearborn St., Chicago 5, Ill. HArrison 7-5380.

CONTENTS: JANUARY 1960

1803 V. 31-32 1960-61

SERMONS

Judgment in January ..... *David J. Maitland* 7
Time as Opportunity ..... *Karl H. A. Rest* 9
Trusting God's Destiny ..... *Francis B. Sayre, Jr.* 12
The Nonchalance of Faith ..... *H. Jackson Forstman* 15
Bezaleel, the Craftsman ..... *W. Thomas Smith* 17
Beginning at the End ..... *Ross M. Willis* 19

ARTICLES

Learning from the World ..... *David B. Watermulder* 4
The Person and the Church ..... *J. N. Kelly* 24

FEATURES

Book Reviews 26
Memo 3
Poetry 2
Prayers 11, 14, 22
Pulpit Calendar 30

KINSHIP

So God created man,
Bringing to birth
Out of the transient elements
Of earth,
A breathing heart,
A body, pulsing, live,
Yet more than this —
A soul . . . with power to strive.

Though sin may blur the image,
Mar the scheme,
Let no man ever despise
His Maker's dream,
But cherish the precious birthright
Dearly won —
Communion between the Father
And His son.

KATHERINE L. RAMSDELL

The Pulpit

A Journal of Contemporary Preaching

VOLUME XXXI JANUARY 1960 NO. 1

Memo:

THERE is a direct clash between the position taken by the Roman Catholic hierarchy in its recent statement on birth control in relation to American policy at home and abroad and the national interest of the United States. In minimizing the threat from the population explosion and in announcing their opposition to any American aid which would include what they call "artificial" means of birth control, the bishops seek to commit this nation and the world to a head-in-the-sand policy which can only lead to global disaster. In attempting to impose upon this nation restrictions arising from their sectarian definition of sin they are moving from the Roman Catholic community, whose rules they have a right to prescribe, into the nation, whose laws cover non-Catholics as well as Catholics and are constitutionally separated from clerical control. If the bishops have their way, they will gravely compromise the national interest of the United States, which cannot be dissociated from the consequences of a population increase of global dimensions.

However, in an authoritarian church, the bishops had little room for choice. They maintained silence on birth control as it applied to national policy until this year, and spoke only when silence became untenable. Last July a special committee studying foreign aid recommended to the President that advice on means of curbing rapid population growth should be given to nations which requested it. In September the Senate foreign relations committee released news of a Stanford University study suggesting large-scale tests of birth control measures. In October the World Council of Churches released the recommendation of one of its committees that warned of a worldwide "population explosion" and suggested widespread use of artificial and natural means of control. By November, when the bishops met for their annual meeting in Washington, the reasons for speaking out must have seemed to outweigh the considerations which counseled silence.

Among the latter stood the harmful effect which any pronouncement of this character would be likely to have on the success of Catholic candidates for the presidency. As soon as the statement was released, newspapers all over the country questioned presidential aspirants concerning their attitude on the issue of making birth control information available as an element in the U.S. foreign aid program. Senator John Kennedy and Governor Edmund G. Brown of California, the two leading Catholic candidates, took the line that our government does not have the "right to impose upon any other country any particular ideas it may have, nor interfere with the religious practices of other countries," in the words of Governor Brown. Granted, but irrelevant! Nobody has proposed what he denounced. Senator Kennedy said he had long ago come to the conclusion which the bishops had just enunciated. He also denied that we have the right to impose our views *or to advise* other nations on a policy which the United States government has not adopted for this country.

Senator Symington took a position which should command widespread respect and agreement. He said: "Poverty and disease are characteristic of many overpopulated countries. They are also two of the foremost allies of communism. I approve the government's furnishing of planned-parenthood information abroad where it believes the action is to the interest of our country." Adlai E. Stevenson's position was also firm and humane: "The United States should not impose birth-control programs on foreign countries. But the United States should not hesitate to consider requests for aid to birth-control programs in foreign countries where population growth is inimical to economic well-being." Senator Hubert M. Humphrey's position amounted to the same thing.

The country should be grateful that the issue of population policy, national and international, has been raised in advance of the 1960 election for several reasons. The first and by no means the most important is the insight it will give on the political power of the hierarchy over candidates and over the people generally. More significant will be the opportunity for education of the American people on the fact that economically and socially we are inescapably a part of the world. The round earth is the home of one human race, and sooner or later its prosperous people, its well people, its educated people must bear the burdens of their less fortunate brethren or lose their own privileges. This is right, because we have one Father and one Savior, Jesus Christ.

HAROLD E. FEY

Analyzing a Weekly News Magazine Clarifies the Demands of Preaching

LEARNING FROM

WHILE the problem of many sermons is that they have nothing to say (and often say it very well!), equally disturbing is the sermon which has much to say but doesn't know how to say it.

The people who hear our sermons are conditioned by the modern methods of communication which confront them every day. Much as they would like to be, they simply are not in tune with our wave length. A fellow preacher might understand what we are saying, but not the layman. In the first place, maybe we take too much for granted. Or we have concluded one point before the listener has, and he is still struggling with the first idea before he realizes we are midway in the next one. Or the vocabulary — so glib in clerical circles — drops a dozen people by the sidelines for every paragraph. "Wasn't that a good sermon," (or "profound") the people remark afterward, "but just what did he say?"

For the present, we can dismiss the preacher who has nothing to say but says it well. What is left of his own integrity should condemn him. We *should* feel for the man who has much to say, but somehow doesn't get it from his mind into the minds of his people. Sometimes a word from the world can help him. Didn't Jesus say, "The children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of light"? If the business world is so proficient in communicating to the public, we ought to be willing to sit at its feet and learn.

Content and Trouble

Suppose we have all the solid content we need, so that is not our problem. Suppose we have trouble in making sure that what we say at least registers on the minds of those we say it to. Can someone who constantly gets through to the same people we address give us a pointer or two? No doubt many can, simply by our observing them. One, in particular, has gone so far as to let us in on the secrets of successful communication.

In 1948, *Time* magazine celebrated its 25th anniversary. From 1923 to 1948 it grew into the foremost weekly news magazine in our country. In its anniversary issue[1] (which incidentally had a picture of Reinhold Niebuhr on the cover) the editors let down their hair, and told the readers how they went about spreading the news each week. What was their motivation, their policy, their method? How did they succeed in making their magazine the most widely read weekly news magazine? If they have learned how to convey temporal truth so effectively, might we learn from them how to convey eternal truth? I believe we can as we compare their motives and methods of spreading the news with our motives and methods of proclaiming the Good News.

Objectives

The editors first considered their objectives. "*Time* . . . promised its readers to tell what the news meant, to get it all into proper perspective . . . it asked to be judged not by how much information it got between its covers, but by how much it got off its pages into the minds of its readers."

The preacher may begin with a similar objective. What is this gospel about? Putting it in perspective, in an atomic age when there is a reputed return to religion, what does it have to say? Any minister can load a sermon with information, just as any magazine can. The test is: Does the information get from the sermon to the listener? If it doesn't, who is benefited by the preaching of it?

Time went on to burst the "all the facts" fallacy. Listen to their editors: " 'All the facts' about the simplest news event . . . would . . . fill a library . . . they can't be assembled and could not be understood if they were. The shortest or the longest news story is the result of selection. The selection is not, and cannot be, 'scientific' or 'objective.' It is made by human beings who bring to the job

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[1] Courtesy TIME; copyright Time Inc. 1948.

By David B. Watermulder

THE WORLD

their own personal experience and education, their own values. They make statements about facts. Those statements, invariably, involve ideas."

So with the preacher. What is worse than a sermon that tries to exhaust a subject or bring total, conclusive proof for an idea? A preacher begins with one central idea. Is he accomplishing his purpose if he discusses as many different points of view as he can cram into his sermon? Or does he digest his material for his own benefit, and then give the studied result to his people? "Preach suggestively, not exhaustively" has always been a good homiletical rule. God pity the preacher who must discuss "all the facts." But pity the congregation even more!

Moreover, *Time* found that its attempt to measure its effectiveness in terms of what the people understood rather than in terms of what it wrote, "turned out to be far more difficult, exciting — and welcome — than the innocent simplicity of 1923 foretold."

Does the preacher dare measure his effectiveness in terms of what is understood rather than what is said? What makes the weekly sermon preparation a fascinating new adventure each time, instead of the weekly treadmill? Is it not the preacher's determination to make the eternal truth come alive? Anyone can say that God was in Christ. But can he say it so that people comprehend it, respond to it, apply it to another area of life? If reporting weekly news events becomes "difficult, exciting — and welcome" to a magazine editor because he measures his success in terms of what the reader grasps, how much more difficult, exciting and welcome should be the reporting of the Good News!

Time also discovered that "People in America are, for the most part, poorly informed." They said this wasn't the fault of the newspapers or weekly news reviews. Rather, "People are uninformed because no publication has adapted itself to the time which busy men are able to spend on simply keeping informed."

The preacher knows his people are poorly informed on the Christian message. They have a host of interests. The better the person, the more the interests. No longer is the church the social center or intellectual fountain of the community life. The preacher's appeal must be to busy people. If they come to church and hear a rambling discourse on nothing much, he has offended them and presumed on their tight schedules. They are poorly informed religiously. After they hear a sermon, are they any better informed?

To sum up these comparable objectives: (1) Preaching must get through to the congregation. What matters is not only what the preacher studies and says, but what gets through and strikes home. (2) Preaching must be suggestive. Not exhaustive discourse which belongs in the classroom or in the essay-article, but suggestive preaching, well fortified in facts. (3) Preaching must be a tough, daring adventure. Not an easy weekly routine about obvious sentimentalities, but real wrestling with the living Word as it confronts men today, and so stimulates the preacher that he stimulates others. (4) Preaching must adapt itself to busy men who are in a hurry and prize their hours. Maybe it *is* their fault if they don't go to church. Certainly they are poorly informed about the faith. But when they do come, do they find the preaching crisp, concise, clear? Does it reflect that sympathetic understanding of where the people are, until it leads them to where they ought to be?

Methods

Thus did the editors of *Time* consider their objectives. They went on to disclose the *method* which they used to achieve their purpose. First, they said, "The news could be 'completely organized,' *i.e.*, laid out in a field pattern of departments, such as National Affairs, Sport," etc. With preaching also it must be one theme at a time. If the preacher is to be just as effective with the Good News, he must be just as careful to have "a fixed pattern of departments."

Surely this suggests to the conscientious preacher that he lay out the themes for his sermons several weeks or months in advance. The details of the sermons may not be complete, but the variation of

emphasis needs careful planning. The same gospel has prophetic proclamation as well as priestly succor. Note the fact that some ministers are both boring and flat because they ride their hobbies in every sermon. No matter what the subject, you know they will end up in psychology, Christian education or race relations. Perhaps one reason the minister can be justified in having a longer vacation than enjoyed by most of his members is to give him time to leisurely read, study and plan during at least a portion of the vacation. The minister must plot out the year's preaching, making sure it strikes a good balance and covers the range of the entire biblical message, with its doctrine and application, its personal and social themes. This not only gives preaching refreshing variety, but helps the minister steer a straight course as he prepares each sermon, sparing him from those diverting tangents which so often confuse the congregation.

Striking a Balance

The second method *Time* uses to achieve its objective is stated this way: "The news had to be added up and a balance struck 'to point out what the news means.' " So with preaching. The Good News must be interpreted and applied to our generation. A sermon on doubting Thomas and the validity of doubt certainly should have a different frame of reference in 1959 than it had in 1926. Otherwise, we might assume that every application of the gospel had been properly made by now. Old commentaries, old text books, old sermons would merely need our voice to let them speak. But preaching means interpretation, with a keen eye and ear to what people are thinking and what their problems are. If a news magazine must interpret, how much more a preacher must interpret.

After forty years in the ministry, Dr. Fosdick wrote: "The early years of my ministry were engaged above all else in trying to make the Christian gospel intellectually palatable to modern minds that believed in such truths as evolution and the reign of natural law. That had to be done, but now, when it is done, when only belated minds suppose that Christianity must be thought of in prescientific terms, how radically the relationship between Christ and this modern scientific civilization has shifted!"[2] "A balance struck to point out what the news means." The good preacher is alert to what the eternal truth means in each generation.

Here is the third method *Time* uses to achieve its objective: "News is made not by 'forces' or governments or classes, but by individual people . . . . Stories told in flesh and blood terms would get into the reader's mind when stories told in journalistic banalities would not." Every preacher knows the added boost a sermon gives when personalities stride through its message. Truth needs to live in people if it is to come alive. God wasn't content to dwell in abstractions; he became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Preaching need not be content to dwell in abstractions; it may become incarnate in his mystical body, the church. Events and characters in the Bible become contemporary with the plight of modern man. Personalities such as Martin Luther King, or even the pitiful characters in many modern dramas, may do more to convince the listener than a page full of abstract reasoning.

It is reassuring to hear its editors affirm, "*Time*'s determination to tell the news, whenever it can, through people, is as strong as ever. 'Human interest' is not only the most interesting kind of news, it is also the 'truest,' *i.e.*, the nearest approach to the way events actually happen." Somehow this truth coming from a successful secular publication adds more weight to what the sensitive preacher already knows. A sermon on the text, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," becomes far more compelling if it begins with the man God called a fool in Luke 12:20, who saw life simply as a process of building bigger and better barns: this enterprising man is the epitome of the young American industrialist who sells even his soul in his effort to satisfy himself with things. With him in the act, the stage is set.

The Busy Man

The editors of *Time* comment that, " 'The busy man,' for *Time*'s purposes, was to be regarded as an expert on nothing. The National Affairs department was not written for politicians, nor Foreign News for cosmopolites, nor Books for bookworms, nor Sport for sport fans. The whole magazine was supposed to be comprehensible to one 'busy man'. . . . [*Time*] had first to be put in language that one man could understand."

Is it not the same with preaching? Here is the doctor whose patient has a fatal disease; the educator, disturbed by doubt, and the hired man with a grade school education; the biblical scholar unconsciously ready to defend his fundamentalism (or his liberalism) and the desperate soul with no religious background save that he is seeking God. If a leading magazine can clarify the news of medicine and music, foreign and national affairs, so that the average man of any reasonable background can comprehend all these fields, then surely the servant of the Word must do the same with the whole gospel when the church doors swing open to "all manner and condition of men" on Sunday morning.

The task is made harder because so much now depends on that hour on Sunday morning. The old adult Bible classes and midweek services aren't what they used to be. The only religious training many people get comes in the Sunday morning

(Continued on page 22)

[2] Harry Emerson Fosdick, *A Great Time to Be Alive* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944). Used by permission.

Judgment in January

By David J. Maitland

THERE are two great times of crisis in the ordinary course of the academic year, January and May. Somehow, however, January seems the grimmest month of all. Perhaps it's because the demands of January come so immediately after the pleasures of the Christmas vacation; or, perhaps it's because January in Minnesota finds us so deep in winter. Some of the edge is certainly taken off of the crisis of May by the fact that many will slip mysteriously through examinations to graduation, and that everyone, no matter how poorly he does, can count on the summer holidays.

On the contrary, January is unrelieved. It is the month in which a student, if he has any occult powers at all, is able to see the handwriting on the wall. It is the month in which we readily understand the sign which a busy executive keeps on his desk: "If you can keep your head while all those around you are losing theirs . . . brother, you have undoubtedly underestimated the situation!" January is the month in which few students underestimate the seriousness of the situation. It is the month in which we make personal application of one alumna's criticism of her waning alma mater: "You have," she wrote, "been sitting around too long on your laurels!" Some of us have undoubtedly been sitting around too long on our laurels and it is for this reason that we may experience judgment in January.

The Centrality of Judgment

Some of you, I am sure, already feel that the emphasis of this sermon is all wrong. You may be saying, "Isn't it enough that we get this stuff from our professors? From a minister of religion we expect words of consolation; we don't want judgment from the pulpit, we want mercy!"

Such attitudes, understandable as they may be, and however much fostered by certain spokesmen for religion, betray a dangerous misunderstanding of the Bible and of the work of the clergy. I will admit now that the relationship between judgment and mercy is a very difficult matter, both in Scripture and in life, as anybody who has the responsibility of rearing children well knows. But must we not acknowledge that by our inordinate emphasis upon mercy, by our refusal to take judgment seriously, we have obscured a central category of biblical faith and have done ourselves a great disservice? This is nowhere better illustrated than in the characterization of "the prevailing American religion," ascribed by Will Herberg to H. Richard Niebuhr: "[We believe in] a God without wrath who brings men without sin into a heaven without judgment." Mercy is not the only emphasis in biblical religion, nor is it the emphasis of the New Testament in opposition to the emphasis on judgment in the Old Testament. This distinction, though widely held by those who can only be uninformed about the Bible, is insidious because it is false to the facts of both the Old and New Testaments.

Judgment and mercy are central to both parts of the Bible, precisely because it is the one God of whom all Scripture speaks. He is not demonically wrathful in one section and irresponsibly merciful in the other. His character is uniform throughout: mysteriously and wonderfully compounded both of judgment and mercy for the making of men.

And it is with reference to this making of men that our national religion of "a God without wrath" and a "heaven without judgment," our strange notion that everybody must win and everybody receive prizes, is deficient. Not only is it not biblical, it is not true. It is not adequate for college students in January, nor for a nation which must face up to the implications of an indefinitely protracted cold war and domestic problems which permit of no easy solutions.

What we need and what, I take it, we are getting both as students and as a nation, is not less judg-

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ment but more. It is not relaxation that we need more of, it is discipline; it is not self-deception that should be enhanced, it is self-awareness. It is not laurels we need to sit on, it is convictions we need to stand for; it is not only a great history we need to look back upon, it is clear and worthwhile goals that we need ahead of us. Lacking these, we will continue under judgment, for this is the only fit means at God's disposal to make us into the kind of men — both students and Americans — for which he created us.

Remedial Function of Judgment

Too often when we hear the word "judgment" we think only of condemnation, of some great calamity sent by God for the punishment of men. Certainly such an understanding has some basis in Scripture, but I suspect that the familiar identification of judgment with condemnation derives primarily from our experience of the judgments which men pass upon each other. These judgments are often marked by vindictiveness, by the desire to destroy rather than to redeem. In addition, human judgment often errs. It was undoubtedly some such considerations which lay behind Jesus' command that we should not judge each other: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. . . ."

This is perhaps the point at which we should ask ourselves two questions: (1) Biblically, what is the reason for God's judgment? (2) What is the purpose of God's judgment?

The answer to the first question, the reason for judgment, is comparatively easy to state: God judges us because we are not the kind of men we were created to be. As a consequence of the fact that we do not acknowledge God to be the central reality of life, we have mistaken notions about ourselves and of our relationship with each other. Without God men not only deceive themselves about their own lives, but they are guilty of grave injustices to other men as well. Without God we develop patterns of life contrary to his purposes, and God, who wishes his purposes to be accomplished among men, judges us for our defections from a proper manhood.

But his judgment is not simply punitive. It is not the purpose of God's judgment merely to condemn. This is the basic point, and it is the point most often overlooked. The purpose of judgment is remedial. God confronts us with a crisis; in other words, he judges us in order that he may expose to us the inadequate, the deceptive, the unjust and fraudulent basis upon which our lives are built. A time of crisis (and *crisis* is but the Greek word for judgment) is a time in which men are confronted with the limitations of their resources, a time in which the deficiencies of motives are more than ordinarily exposed. It is a time of uncertainty when old confidences are less reliable than usual; a time in which we must ask searching questions about the basic purposes of our lives, questions about the commitments we have made. In a time of crisis we can no longer escape from ourselves, we can no longer deceive. Crisis is the time of opportunity. It was of such a time that Kierkegaard wrote when he said, "There comes a midnight hour when all men must unmask."

Scripture insists, and it appears to me that life confirms the fact, that there is no way whereby men may permanently escape judgment. While we may evade some of the tests by which life would measure us, we will not escape all of them. It may well be the worst thing in the world for us to avoid the occasions for review, repentance and resolve which confront us while we are still pliable enough to learn the lessons they have to teach. Such, if I read it correctly, is what much contemporary drama is saying. Arthur Miller could hardly have been more forceful in this regard in *Death of a Salesman* as he portrayed the gradually encroaching doom which sealed the self-deceptions of Willy Loman. Could anything less be said of Blanch Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire?*

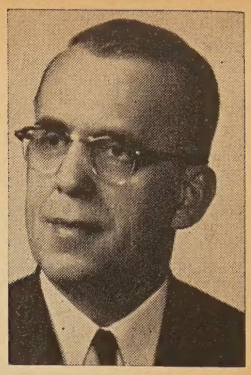
Our effort should not be to avoid crises anymore than it should be to court them. Judgment will come in its own time at places of its own choosing. Our effort should be to determine what the real issues at stake are at such a time, to see ourselves and the direction of our lives more clearly than we normally do.

"Crash Prayers"

This, it would seem, is one of two basic functions of semester examinations. At one level it is the purpose of examinations to test the adequacy of our mastery of the course material in which we are seeking academic accreditation this term. On another level we have what might be called the final cause of examinations. At this level examinations ask us about our basic attitudes toward the business of a college: What motives brought us here? What attitude do we have toward the pursuit of truth, toward honesty in research, accuracy of report, the proper ends which knowledge must serve? These fundamental questions are central to the religious life of a student, for it is in the answers we give to such questions that we disclose the extent of our awareness of God's reasons for having us in college. We have been called to serve him here with the work of our minds. There is no substitute offering which we can make to him in lieu of our academic work for the semester now closing. None of the "crash prayers" which you may offer up in the frenzy of these last days will compensate for poor workmanship in months past, nor, I suspect, will they be of much value in getting you through examinations.

Judgment in January should help us to see that prayer is no substitute for work, however much it

(Continued on page 11)



Time as Opportunity

By Karl H. A. Rest

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.
Ephesians 5:16.

THERE is an element of mystery about time and the more we think about it, the more mysterious it appears to be. "My soul is on fire," said Augustine, as he thought about time and sought "to understand this most intricate enigma." Time has an elusive quality. How easily it slips away from us and we hardly notice it until it is gone.

The mysterious elusiveness of time may impress itself upon us as we sit quietly before an open fire. The stillness of the night is broken by the ticking of the clock on the mantel and it sets loose a train of thought on the enigma of time. The tick we hear reminds us of the present but, even as the tick is recorded, it slips into the past. The action is irreversible; it is gone forever and can never be recalled. Seconds pass into minutes, minutes into hours, hours into days. One day slips into another and, as page after page is torn from our calendar, the months pass into years and the years into centuries. Time washes everything into its gully. We see men and nations, kingdoms and empires, cultures and civilizations, all swallowed up inexorably by the stream of time.

Various Perspectives

What does it all mean? It is a strange experience to consider how the same time may mean various things to different people. How does it appear to a rapidly growing boy, off on his way to school? Though he does not always agree with himself, there are many moments when he is impetuous and impatient. He can hardly wait until he is a big man, when he really will be able to do those things he only dreams about now. He chafes under his limitations. He wants to be big. His burning desire is to grow up in a hurry. Time moves much too slowly for him.

Many an older person, looking upon him, shakes his head and sighs: "Ah, if he only knew it, he is now having the best time of his life." But is he really? It could be; again it may not. At any rate the question is highly debatable.

How does time appear to the young men or women who are ready to leave high school or college and make their own way in the world? As they look to the road ahead, it seems to many of them as though the time-stretch is almost unlimited. There is time enough for everything and then some.

But follow these same young people twenty or thirty years later and we find they view time in an altogether different perspective. Now, as they have used up half or more than half of an ordinary life span, the remaining time seems very short and it becomes exceedingly precious.

Yet not all appreciate the value of time in this manner. We hear older people speak listlessly of "marking time" or "putting in time." Others speak more drastically of "killing time" and they highly extol anything which helps them "pass the time away." It is as though time were an evil which drags heavily upon their hands and must, at all costs, be hurried along.

Chronos Versus Kairos

How shall we think of time? It may be helpful if we keep in mind a distinction made by the ancient Greeks. They had two words to designate time, "chronos" and "kairos." Chronos is time as measured by the clock or the calendar whereas kairos is time as measured by opportunity.

Kairos is pictured as a youth who is a swift runner. The back of his head is smoothly shaven whereas the hair in front is long. It symbolizes the truth that, if we are to seize the time-charged opportunity, we must be prepared for it as it comes and grasp it by the forelock. If we hesitate, the swiftly running youth passes us by and we cannot possibly seize him, as his hair is too short in back to lay hold of him. The time-charged

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opportunity is then no longer within our grasp.

Chronos is also pictured in human form. He, however, is portrayed as an old man, bowed down by the weight of years, and his face is incredibly sad. It symbolizes the mere passage of time. As nothing has been done with time, nothing is left save a legacy of futile regret which is indicated by the tragic figure whose spirit has been broken by the passage of time.

If time is charged with opportunity and not merely a succession of empty moments, it is shameful to waste it and it is sinful to kill it. The Bible places the accent upon time as kairos, as a God-given opportunity to use and not abuse. We are never justified in killing time, no matter how "evil" it may appear. We are to make the most of it, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

We think of how God once redeemed time and the effect it has had on all time. When the opportune moment came, God sent forth his Son into the world. Through Christ God has reconciled the world unto himself. In this act of reconciliation time was redeemed. It was charged with opportunity, giving man solid spiritual ground for a dynamic faith, a vital hope and a heartwarming love which transforms his existence.

In the brief span of less than three and one-half decades, Jesus Christ affected the lives of people not only in his generation but of all subsequent generations. A nameless writer has described the place of Jesus Christ in history and his influence upon human living in words which have won widespread acceptance:

> Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race and the leader of the column of progress.
> I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as has that One Solitary Life.

Jesus Christ is the great watershed of history for we mark all activities in reference to him and we date all events as coming before his birth or after. The B.C. and the A.D. on our calendars pay tribute to the centrality of Jesus Christ.

Not only does he occupy the central place in history. Jesus Christ is the spiritual source of life to countless millions of people the world over. Wherever his redemptive presence is felt, life becomes changed. It is cleansed and purified by his grace of forgiveness; it is renewed and fortified for nobler living through his grace of strength. Life is made over so completely that the New Testament likens it to a new birth.

Redemptive Opportunities

If our lives have been changed by the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ, should we not be willing witnesses of that power which transforms us and upholds us? For us there are many opportunities through the church and the Christian tradition.

We do it through the support we give to missions. The mission fields throughout the world can be viewed as centers of redemptive influence. Missionaries are there to make the best possible use of time. They are redeeming time when they bear testimony to the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ, seeking thereby to bring others into the fellowship where they may experience the same redemptive power. And many people are able to find meaning in life as they relate their existence to Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus Christ opens the door to purposeful living. Whenever that takes place, time is being redeemed. These mission stations are centers from which new life can and does flow.

Active Witness

But this is not enough. We must do more than witness through others. We must bear our own personal testimony of the redeeming grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Theoretically I do not think that many Christians will quarrel with this position; we are pretty well agreed that we must share our faith. But in actual practice what have we done?

Some Christians are active witnesses. They find innumerable opportunities to bear witness to the faith that is within them and their faith is immeasurably strengthened, ever and again, as they "speak a good word for Jesus Christ" by the type of response they receive. The testimony they give helps people to come to a decision for Jesus Christ and it draws them into the redemptive fellowship of the church of Jesus Christ.

Others, while they admire these active witnesses of the faith, never seem to find a time that is charged with opportunity to bear effective testimony. Or they do not recognize the opportunity when it comes; they see it sharply only in retrospect. They are not prepared to seize the opportunity by the forelock and the fleeting "kairos" speeds past. Nor are they able to lay hold of the opportunity from the rear because the "hair is too short" to grasp. Though they feel very badly about it, they have, nevertheless, muffed the opportunity; they are left with only futile regrets.

There are many opportunities for witness in the home as well as in the world at large, if they are recognized at the time. Yet how frequently they slip by and, as they pass over from the present to the past, our attempts to recapture them are nothing but futile gestures.

Consider the story of Willie Keith in Herman Wouk's *Caine Mutiny*. Far away from home, he receives a letter from his father, dying of an incurable disease, in which he wants to give him some last advice. How precious indeed is time to a dying man. He realizes acutely that time is

charged with opportunity. Consider then how poignant is his grief if he has wasted his kairos moments.

The letter in part deals specifically with religion. After acknowledging that Willie had not been given much religion at home, his father says that he intends to send his son a Bible, and advises him to "get familiar with the words . . . you'll never regret it."

There is deep pathos in that letter. What wonderful opportunities the elder Keith had of making the words of the Bible familiar to his son while he was still at home. But he failed to seize the kairos filled moments by the forelock; consequently, these opportunities slipped by him. Watching them depart, he vainly tries to recapture them by sending a Bible to Willie. Yet a lifetime of neglect scarcely can be made up with a simple mailing of a book. Sending a Bible to a grown man is a poor substitute for reading the Bible to a growing lad. It seems almost like a futile gesture.

From the background of the Keith family experience you see why our church regards the increased use of family devotions in the home as a vital part in its program of work. Every home has the kairos opportunity of strengthening the spiritual life of every member of the household through daily devotions in the home. Faithful day-by-day alertness protects against inheriting a legacy of regret.

When people pray together they are strengthened not merely by the stimulation they receive from each other; they are fortified by the living Lord who said that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst of them. When we witness to our own changed lives, others can begin to open themselves to the possibility of real renewal. For we witness beyond ourselves to his strength, his power that makes us equal to the living of these days. Now as always, redemption is his presence enabling us in evil days to redeem the time.

Judgment

(Continued from page 8)

is a necessary accompaniment of a Christian's vocation. We may not offer our prayers *in place of* our work. In *A Sermon Preached . . . at Cambridge University,* 1653, Joseph Sedgwick put the issue quite clearly. This Puritan observed that, "There's as much need of prayer as to the success and fruitfulness of our studies, as to beg our daily bread. [But] doth prayer exclude endeavour? or are endeavours and prayer inconsistent? Can we not receive from God upon our Diligence? and are the gifts of God's spirit unworthy of esteeme, unlesse they drop [as it were] into our mouths?" Thomas à Kempis apparently saw it this way, for he wrote: "Truly at the day of judgment we shall not be examined on what we have read, but on what we have done; not on how well we have spoken, but how . . . we have loved."

It is at this level, in terms of our understanding of our work, of its relationship to the nature and purposes of God and of its relationship to the needs of the human community, that January may be for us not only a time of academic but of Christian judgment as well. Through the crisis of examinations we may come to see the tremendous concern which God has for our academic work. This could hardly be an incidental concern for the God who says of himself, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."

In all events January will be the month of midnight hours. For many this will be the hour for that extra cup of coffee, for the Benzedrine ritual, or for a longer look at the bed that won't be occupied till *tomorrow* night. For some, however, it will be the Midnight Hour of unmasking, when, by the grace of God, they see themselves, and their work, and their purposes more clearly than they have ever dared see them before. Such self-awakening, while it will hardly be pleasant, will be the experience of freedom and the basis for living one's whole life to the glory of Him who made us and called us to our vocation.

Prayer

ALMIGHTY God, make us aware of the powers with which thou hast invested us. Thou hast given us large tasks to perform and facilities with which to complete them. Though we quail before the responsibilities that are ours, we would not make a fetish of our helplessness. Forbid that we should fail thee in the face of lavish materials or forget the example of men and women who in the achievement of great things have found courage that rose with danger and powers that increased as they spent them. When the fields are white unto the harvest and we stand idly by, bemoaning the world situation and forgetting that thou dost work through human agents, may we remember a Voice that has always spoken to Christians in trying situations: "My grace is sufficient for thee and my strength is made perfect in weakness." Out of such discovered strength may we dedicate ourselves to the building of thy holy Kingdom of love, justice and peace. Amen. — *Charles J. Lotz, Bloomington, Illinois.*

Trusting God's Destiny

By Francis B. Sayre, Jr.

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law . . . and said, "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. Genesis 19:14.

THE fierce culmination of destiny was at the door of Sodom. The Lord was about to fulfill its fate. But within the city there were two minds as to what that fate would be, and who the god would be that would execute it. Lot was of the minority; he stood up for decency and the ancient custom that strangers should be welcomed with honor. He believed that this was God's way, and that a society of callous delinquents could not flout the laws of God, but could only succeed in breaking itself against those immutable commandments. But his sons-in-law thought that God did not call and that they could go on forever in their happy selfishness. So it was that when Lot summoned them to flee from the divine retribution, they laughed. So far apart was the father from these boys in their idea of truth and where it must lead! So different was their outlook on reality that it seemed to either side that the other was only mocking them. Between the young men and the older man no word would serve to reconcile their ways of life.

Dilemma Repeated

Last autumn, as the leaders of the two nations which dominate the earth sat facing one another in their mountain retreat at Camp David, the dilemma of Lot and his sons-in-law was repeated on a scale more vast than that of a single city on the plain of Palestine. If ever destiny was at the gate, it was then; all mankind hung in the balance. Yet here were two men, human both, who differed not only in language, but in the very organization of their thought. Words they had, but so little common reference that communication must have been well-nigh impossible, so that I am sure it must often have seemed to them both that each was mocking the other. For example: When at a dinner in Los Angeles Spyros Skouras poured out his love of capitalistic America, in which a poor Greek immigrant boy could rise to be president of 20th Century Fox, Khrushchev thought he was being mocked and countered heatedly with the story of his own rise in the Communist world. The Americans there did not take too well to his railing proverbs, for they in turn felt themselves mocked. Thus each has his own god, across the cold-war barricade, and no amount of pious intoning will lull the other over. There comes a moment of seeming deadlock, dreadful in its peril, which, it may be, only God on high can resolve.

This is the moment to which we have come. It is therefore not only the instant when portentous decisions must be made, but the moment when we as a nation must look anew at the faith we proclaim. Who is the God we serve, and what does it mean to do his will? Clearly we must make sure of this if ever we are to decipher the destiny that lies ahead. Is our road across the hills at the bidding of God as it was for Lot? Or do we trust in the strength of our city, relying on ourselves, scorning the stranger and looking back wistfully to the image of our own splendor as did Lot's luckless wife? On our coins we have inscribed "In God we trust." I wonder if we really do.

Confused Reaction

Well, it would be hard to tell if one judged by the confused reaction of our people to the Khrushchev visit. Our first instinct was to wrap him up in a defensive cocoon of security, as an oyster protects its innards from the adventitious grain of sand by surrounding it with a pearly coat. We insulate the foreign body in a ball of cynical newsmen, just as the human body defends itself against the infection of a stray bullet by secreting a little sac in which it is isolated.

But then there are some who, seeing how this remarkable Russian can break through a cordon of police, slap a fat farmer on the belly and coin a pretty compliment for the agriculture of a plentiful land, are tempted to think that there may be

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FRANCIS B. SAYRE, JR., *fifth dean of the Washington Cathedral (Episcopal), Washington, D.C., delivered this sermon on the occasion of Mr. Khrushchev's visit to that city last autumn.*

some easy way of communicating with this down-to-earth man and his hard-working people.

How far can we trust these Russians when they propose that for which we all yearn — disarmament at once, peace immediately? There are some who will say that we must trust them if they are to trust us. But anyone who watched Mr. Khrushchev angrily pull down the blind when he was asked about the Hungarian revolution realizes that our trust may be in God, but it never can be given to the government of Communist Russia.

I remember that when Archbishop Nicholas, the Metropolitan of Moscow, was visiting the Cathedral Close a few years ago, he told us the Christian church in Russia is free. But only yesterday I received an authentic report of how the Soviet Government is attempting systematically to undermine the church: by keeping it from theological exchange with modern thought in the West — there are no books in Russian seminaries more recent than 1915 — and thus rendering the church obsolete and irrelevant; by infiltrating its priesthood with state agents who purposely manufacture scandal to discredit the church in the eyes of the people; and by penalizing in the schools any young people seen attending public worship. How can others trust the good will of an administration like that?

Empty Faith

But what then? Shall we, like the citizens of Sodom, trust in the walls we have built around our city? Shall we simply reject the Russian proposals for disarmament and keep on with the race, trusting in our own strength? This, I fear, is indeed the faith of a great many in our nation. But it too is empty, for Maginot lines are fallible even though they be made of shining rockets. Human intelligence, including the cloak and dagger kind, is imperfect, and the resolution of the best of men is capricious. And fate is accident-prone — one slip, and then the abyss. The sons-in-law of Lot may mock, but the truth is that this great nation will be saved neither by faith in the Russians nor faith in ourselves, but only in God! It is really a false alternative to think, as many a secular mind will, that we are forced to choose between trusting either in the good faith of Communists or in the integrity of our own defense. For *all* faith, if it be not lifted up beyond the nodding heads of mortal men, will fail. In the long run our trust must really be in God, in whose hand it rests to save the city or to let it fall.

If we as a nation were *really* to commit our fortunes into the hands of God, what specifically would that imply? It may, perhaps, be presumptuous for me to try to say. But surely if we followers of Christ in the churches have no hints to give, we will have failed the Christian leaders of this nation who earnestly expect of us some measure of moral guidance. And I think there *are* some practical principles that flow from a humble faith in the Lord, righteous and merciful. The first of these is that we must not doubt that the human race is one, since every human creature that is born on earth is made, as the Bible says, in God's image. No matter how deep the rift between East and West, it would be folly to assume it to be immutable; for as long as man is man, bridges can be built, and one side may yet learn to understand the other. May I cite just one illustration of this, given me by one of the guides at the recent American exposition in Moscow? The most frequent question on the lips of the Russian visitors was about God. They wanted to know how many Americans believe in God, and how we reconcile our faith with our advanced technology. The wistfulness of those questions belies the godless reputation under which the Russian people suffer, and leaps right over the barricades to suggest a deep affinity between their people and ours. Who knows, maybe this is why God keeps popping up in those Russian proverbs and even in the speech of hardy Mr. Khrushchev! For even he, despite the dogma of his Marxist materialism, knows in his heart of hearts that "a little meat, a little potatoes" is not all there is to life. He would not have come, making a play to capture the aspirations of mankind, if he did not know that there is a universal spirit common to all of us which makes it impossible for the world ultimately to remain severed into two mocking camps.

Risking the Bridge

The second consequence of faith for a God-fearing people is that if there exists a bridge between all men in the human spirit, then it behooves us to cross that bridge at least halfway. We have to go out to meet our brothers with creative single-mindedness, with conviction and imagination. It is our duty before God. Too often it appears to the watching world that we did not dare to do that. What, for example, is *our* plan for disarmament and peace? Do we advocate an armed stalemate only, foregoing the substance of agreement on account of the technicalities of method? But nothing stands still in this world, as the Soviet Premier well knows. The status quo, which so often seems to be our policy, is but a pillar of salt, dead and impotent. We must dare, as Lot dared, to trust our destiny in unknown paths, relying on the righteousness of truth and the responding spirit of people who everywhere will rejoice to see our faith and come to meet us from the other side of the bridge.

Finally, the third principle for us to remember is that if God be God at all, then *He* is the ruler of the universe, not we. This has a very practical meaning for our people, for it means that we must not fear to make mistakes. Curiously enough, it is at the point of understanding God's providence

that we actually meet the Russians at the center of the bridge. For, in a disturbed way they believe in it too. We believe that the course of history is ultimately set within the will of God. They believe it is set by the inexorable operation of economic law which willy-nilly will one day crown the proletariat with all power and satisfaction in this world. But whether you call it God or economic law is in one sense only a question of semantics, for in both cases there is shared a true perspective of man: He is a little lower than the angels; his life is fitted to a plan far wider than his own ambition; and, ultimately, whether we go here or there, succeed or fail in the schemes of the moment, our fate is in the hands of God.

The difference here between the Russians and ourselves is only that which divided Lot from his sons-in-law. Lot saw the holiness in God's destiny; but the boys saw only the crassness and cruelty of it — and they mocked. We too, God helping, must see the holiness of God's plan for men and the sacredness of our mission within that plan. And then, with such faith within us, we must be ready to follow the angel — stumbling perhaps along the way, but nevertheless following onward in the path of God.

Prayer

ALMIGHTY God, we come to thee this day with penitent hearts. Thy word urges us to confess our sin. Grant in the light of thy love that we may have the assurance of sin forgiven and possess the power to break the chain that binds us. Give us the will to sin no more.

We come with praise tumbling off our lips from full hearts. We share the psalmist's song that it is a good thing to praise thy worthy name. We honor thee most of all for the love that drew salvation's plan — a love so infinite that no one is shut out. In the security of such love help us never to cease to be amazed at the mystery of divine grace.

We come with petitions. Thy word directs us to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. Strengthen the weak for the tasks of yet another day. Refresh the weary that feet may move again and tired hands find new vigor. Comfort the wounded and sorrowful with the light of thy presence and relieve their loneliness.

We come to thee with purpose. Thy son Jesus has bid us wear his yoke and learn of him. We submit ourselves to the instruction of the Holy Spirit. May thy word, sharper than any two-edged sword, pierce our stubborn minds, reign victorious over our wills and move us in the way everlasting. Amen. — *George W. Brown, Jr., First Congregational Church, Fall River, Massachusetts.*

"Just a Parish Minister"

By Roy Pearson

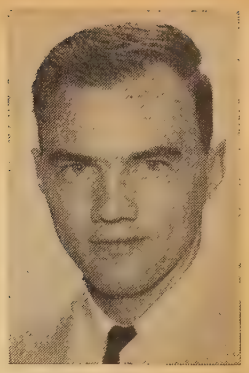
ONE of the better known observations of G. K. Chesterton is his comment that if he had the direction of the church, he would have young preachers start in as bishops and then gradually work up, as their competence was demonstrated, to the high office of parish priest. Like so many other iconoclasms coming from Chesterton, this has too much error to be swallowed whole and too much truth to be left wholly unswallowed.

I suppose that what he was trying to emphasize in the life of the church was the terrible importance of the unquestionably local. The indispensable element in organized Christianity, he was saying, is the ordinary parish church. What does not happen there, does not happen at all; and what happens there, happens to the church's whole body. In the letter of recommendation which he sent to the school trustees, the provost of Oriel College predicted that if Thomas Arnold were appointed headmaster of Rugby, "he would change the face of education all through the public schools of England," and every parish minister stands in Arnold's shoes and every local church has Rugby's opportunity.

When God set out to reveal himself in the fullness of his glory, the robes he chose were not those of conqueror or king, not those of temple priest or Roman procurator, but those of the local carpenter in a village not highly regarded by the highly placed. So, I suspect, it always is with God. In the work of his Kingdom, administrative hierarchies may be necessary, but they are usually a necessary evil. Middlemen may be unavoidable, but they are commonly an unavoidable encumbrance. Remote control is not greatly esteemed in the life of the Kingdom. It is the man-to-man relationship that matters. It is in the local fellowship of believers that the bush takes fire and the ground becomes holy.

For any man to say that he is "just a parish minister" is for him to show his ignorance of what a parish minister is called to be. The farther we get from the local church, the easier it is to be concerned with theology but not with religion; the easier it is to deal in philosophy but not in life; the easier it is to praise discipleship but not be disciples, to advocate praying but never pray, to talk about love but feel no need to love a hateful neighbor. Before faith can be applicable everywhere, it must be applicable somewhere, and in the ordinary, local church the man who is "just a parish minister" is standing precisely where God has lodged his greatest hopes for all mankind.

Reprinted from *The Andover Newton News Reporter*, June 1959.



The Nonchalance of Faith

By H. Jackson Forstman

THE apostle Paul was a strange person. He possessed such a many-faceted personality: evangelist, church administrator, counselor, defender of the gospel, a tireless worker who apparently could be detained in one place only by imprisonment. He was probably a man of frail health, shipwrecked, beaten countless times, left for dead; but also the man who became *the* theologian of the early church and, indeed, maintained this position throughout many centuries of the church. He was an ecstatic; it seems he always wrote in a hurry. Yet he could express himself with a good deal of precision. He was seldom poetic, yet even this gift was not withheld from him, because, in spite of all the tribulations and anxieties that accrued to him because of the tremendous mission which he undertook, he was still on occasion a poet.

The intriguing thing about Paul's poetry is that it most often centered around the same theme. It crops up in the most unexpected places. In I Corinthians it bursts forth in a paragraph where he is arbitrating a serious division in the Corinthian church. In Romans it appears in a section dealing mainly with maxims for the mundane responsibilities of Christians. The theme that predominates in Paul's poetry is that of joyous abandon — one might almost say nonchalance.

So in Romans, the fourteenth chapter, he sings out: "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." This is the ultimate *nonchalance* of faith, and it has a good deal to say to you and me.

For one thing, it speaks to our human anxieties. I don't think any of us escapes entirely from the plague of anxiety. There is too much responsibility put upon us just by virtue of our being human beings. We are fathers and husbands: We have the responsibility of furnishing security for our families. We are mothers and wives: We have responsibilities that are not to be scoffed at. We are parents: It is impossible to overestimate the responsibility of parenthood in this day. The bodies, minds and souls of the children have been placed in our keeping. But these are not the only responsibilities we have. Beyond these things there are so many other concerns that consume our attention and can cause a good deal of anxiety if we allow them to do so.

Obscurity of the Future

Our situation is aggravated by the obscurity of the future. No man can know what will happen ahead of time. There are those who make a profession of predicting the weather, the state of business, the stock market, etc. None of them is absolutely reliable, and when it comes to knowing in advance something that is quite concrete, as in the case of your future or my future, we are hopelessly at sea. Health, fortune, events of all sorts in the future are completely shrouded, and only the march of time will lift the shroud. But few of us, if any, can take heart in that, and simply wait patiently and without anxiety for the future to reveal itself. We scurry about, plot and plan our future and worry that it will not turn out as we hope it might.

There is a well-known saying of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount which speaks to this situation. "Be not concerned for the morrow for the morrow will be anxious for itself." Jesus called attention to the lilies of the field which do nothing at all but are arrayed with a glory which eludes even the most powerful monarch. Paul added to this that no matter what may happen we may take heart in the conviction that we are the Lord's.

This is not an easy thing to do. There is an inherent tendency in every person to want to have control of himself and his future at every turn. We are always looking ahead, planning, and then becoming anxious that things might not happen for the best or in the way we have planned.

We are so hesitant to leave our future open. We

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think we know what is best. When future events unfold and contradict the plans we have made, we become anxious. There is the matter of health and sickness about which we are so often concerned. But some people learn for the first time truly what it means to live only when they have lost their health. There is the question of security which is back of so many of the anxieties that plague us. But here too there are some people who have learned what it really means to live when faced with the loss of the security they had come to cherish. All of this is not to say that bankruptcy and loss of health are to be desired. Certainly not. Only that the fear of them, like all our fears, should not be allowed to get hold of us and drive us to anxiety. And they won't, if we only live *now*, with our futures open, and live to the Lord in the certain confidence that, whatever may happen, our faith in God and the support it gives us cannot be taken away.

Antidote for Differences

This nonchalance of faith is also the best antidote for the difficulties arising from differences between Christians. "Whatever you do, do to the Lord," says Paul. This is actually the context in which Paul's statement was made. Listen to it: "One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. He also who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while he who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God." The observance of days and rules of fasting are seldom issues in this day, but what Paul was getting at is an issue. We should not bother ourselves to criticize other Christians, whether they be of other faiths or of our own church. We must only make sure that what we do we do to the glory of God, and then assume that what others do they do to the glory of God. It is one thing to make clear where one differs from others and why. It is another thing to criticize the other person and to cast doubts on the validity of his faith. It is still another thing — and far worse — to show no interest at all.

If we work on the assumption that what others do they do to the Lord, then we will be much more liable to understand, appreciate and appropriate certain aspects of the thought and worship of others. Certainly those remaining points of difference will be softened considerably by a mutual drive transcending all others: the glory of God. He who can live his life to the Lord becomes possessed of a nonchalance and joyous abandon that is the epitome of Christian living.

But we have not yet noted the ultimate pinnacle of faith's nonchalance. It is that beyond which there can be none greater. Listen to it again and let the full weight of it come to you: "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die we die to the Lord: so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." No man can ask for a larger faith than this. No man can ask for a deeper joy than that which issues from this faith.

Some people feel they must know what it is like after death. Some ministers have a stock-in-trade sermon which seeks to answer the question. It cannot be answered. There is nothing in the Bible that tells us clearly. But what difference does it make if our lives are based on the faith that we are the Lord's?

The inevitability of death stands above every man as the great enigma, the great mystery. It causes apprehension and anxiety. In our age it is in bad taste to talk much about death, particularly to those who face it. There is such finesse; the whole thing is "handled so well."

All of this is nonsense. The Christian song rises right through the clouds of mystery, through the mists of the unknown right up to the brightness of God himself. Or rather we should say that to the Christian the Sun of God shines through the darkest cloud and lights up all of life and, we must add, death as well. "Whether we live or whether we die we are the Lord's." This is all the Christian needs to know. There is no greater assurance. With this faith all things can be faced and faced with joy though the outcome be defeat and even death.

The source of this joy is the fact that for one who has really grasped the meaning of Christian faith and has made it his own, the assurance of the present is entirely sufficient. There is no dependence on a certain outcome of the future. The assurance that we are the Lord's carries us in the present and through whatever may come in the future. Difficulties do arise, adversities do come and their sting is not automatically removed by faith in God. But we do find ourselves stronger and somehow many of the adversities turn out to be not nearly so terrible as those might suppose who stand by themselves.

But we need never stand alone. He who has been through the valley of darkness, through the hell of crucifixion, stands with us if we will let Him. This in itself is no easy thing to do. We are all prone to want to stand by ourselves. To let him stand with us is to surrender ourselves to him. It is to sacrifice our glory and live only to his glory. It is to live no longer to ourselves or to our small circle, but rather to live to him. If, through faith, we can do this then we can also die to him. And this issues in the nonchalance of faith, that faith which sings now and always: "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."

Bezaleel, the Craftsman

By W. Thomas Smith

LIFE is often very dull! It can be dull for moderns, and it certainly was ashen and drab for the ancients. It is difficult for us to realize the plight of the vast majority of those who have lived on this planet: a life of unspeakable monotony. As we read of the pageantry of the Pharaohs, we need to keep before us the grim realization that most of the Egyptians enjoyed almost nothing of that glamorous life. Certainly the captive Hebrews experienced little thrill and charm in their sojourn in the Nile Valley. For them it was daily toil in the brick pits.

Suddenly, in the book of Exodus we come across a striking bit of history: the march to freedom. Bondage in Goshen is past, but now there is the experience of the wilderness and life still has precious little glitter and sparkle. Then we have the building of the Tabernacle. By order of Moses, the Children of Israel were to have a place of worship — a church. This stands as one of the high-water marks in the life of the Hebrews: a sanctuary where orderly worship was to be conducted. Until this point, their services had been rather haphazard. Previously there had been pauses in their march when prayers were offered and sacrifices made. But now, for the first time, they were to follow a ritual and have a shrine which would be dedicated to God.

It is as though we could see a burst of bright sunlight coming into a rather dull hall in human history. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel . . . and I have filled him with the spirit of God in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass. . . ." A man named Bezaleel, son of Uri, of the tribe of Judah, was chosen as the one to fashion the magnificent pieces for the Tabernacle: the Ark of the Covenant, the Seven-branch Candlestick; the Table of Shewbread; the Laver; the Altar of Incense, and the Altar of Sacrifice. There is an elaborate description of the careful and loving way in which this artist worked, he and those he taught. Bezaleel — a true craftsman! There was a joy in his work as well as the beauty of workmanship.

There is the old and oft-quoted line that the Greeks worshiped the Holiness of Beauty, while the Hebrews worshiped the Beauty of Holiness. It is a mistake to think the Hebrews void of love for the beautiful. There was much of the love of beauty in the Hebrew tradition and Bezaleel is the symbol of it. Into the matter of daily and lusterless work there comes the shining light of the true craftsman. Here is one who delights in his labor, and in so doing, transforms the ordinary into the beautiful. Here is dedication of daily toil, except that it is no longer toil. It is toil transformed into worship.

Care and Skill

Dr. George A. Gordon had a favorite sermon centered around the theme, "Lilies on the Temple." He pointed out that there were delicately carved flowers at the top of Solomon's temple, flowers so high that no eye could ever behold them. Yet the carving had been done with utmost care. True, men would never see the stone etching, but God would. This is precisely the theme of the Bezaleel story. Here is a man whose name means "In the shadow of God," and his genius is expressed in making beautiful that which a lesser figure would be content to make very ordinary. Bezaleel took infinite care in his carving and his weaving. We are told of the curtains of fine linen — draperies of blue, purple and scarlet, with gold thread worked into the design. With infinite skill the acacia wood was carved and the brass and silver sockets fitted into place. Gold and silver vessels, the ornaments for the Ark and the various instruments used in the preparation of sacrifices were fashioned. The hangings were of exquisite brass, as were the tent pegs. The costumes for Aaron and the lesser priests were made by Bezaleel and his

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associate Aholiab. They also made the various linens to be used in the service of worship.

"And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the Tabernacle was reared up." The work was finished — Bezaleel's work. Certainly there was exaltation in the heart of Moses, and pride in the heart of Aaron, but above and beyond all the emotions of the two great leaders, there was the quiet thrill in the soul of Bezaleel. He was the craftsman who had put something of his own soul into his work. The Tabernacle really belonged to him. Without the Bezaleels of life, there would be little beauty. We must have the Moseses to lead and the Aarons to minister, but how greatly both depend upon the Bezaleels! It would be possible to have buildings with walls and roofs, but how cold and empty they would be without those touches of genius which give grace and meaning to the brick and stone!

In her lengthy poem, "The Land," Victoria Sackville-West describes the village craftsman. She makes her poem a farmer's calendar, showing the life of rural England. How well she feels the importance of such a common thing as the ploughshare:

> Homer and Hesiod and Virgil knew
> The ploughshare in its reasonable shape,
> Classical from the moment it was new,
> Sprung ready-armed ordained without escape,
> And never bettered though man's cunning grew,
> And barbarous countries joined the classic reach:
> Coulter and swingletree and share and haft,
> Frugal of ornament as peasants' speech,
> Strong to their use and simple as their craft,
> Whether to turn the ridge or cleave the rean."[1]

You say there is nothing of beauty in the creation of a ploughshare? Not so. A blacksmith is capable of creating an object of grace. The ploughshare is indeed humble, yet in the eyes of the One who sees his children given bread, it is infinitely beautiful.

John Ciardi, the poet, has remarked that an ulcer is "an unkissed imagination" which is now taking its revenge for having been jilted. "It is an unwritten poem, a neglected music, an unpainted water color, an unfinished dance."[2] Life can go only so far without beauty. To be sure, existence goes on, but man was not made for existence, he was made for life. Obviously a pig or an ox does not care about the color scheme of his pen or barn. But why are so many barns painted bright red? I have never been told this by a sociologist, nor by an artist, but I think bright red barns give a lift to the eye and soul of a tired farmer. Red breaks the dullness of a cold winter afternoon.

When Martha Berry was building her school at Rome, Georgia, she insisted that a steeple be placed on the barn. Many thought such an idea a stupid waste of money. Not Miss Berry: "As the boys are shoveling the manure, I want them to look up — see the steeple — and know that they are serving God."

The American industrialist, Clarence Francis, is reported to have observed: "You can buy a man's time; you can buy a man's physical presence at a given place; you can even buy a measured number of skilled muscular motions per hour or day. But you cannot buy enthusiasm; you cannot buy initiative; you cannot buy loyalty; you cannot buy the devotion of hearts, minds, and souls. You have to *earn* these things." Yes, and he might have added the love for making the beautiful. It cannot be bought.

God, the eternal craftsman, might have made a vast universe of dull gray. Yet with a joyous abandon he flung ten billion stars into a blue sky. With lavish hand he painted the sunset, spilling the colors across the heavens. With great care he made the snowflake and with equal skill formed the shell on the beach. As no two leaves are duplicates, so he made the faces of his children with loving individuality.

Men of today stand in wonder at the majestic beauty of the Gothic cathedrals. We marvel at the skill of the men who caught a bit of heaven and wove it into stone. As Will Durant says, ". . . the Gothic sculptor, in the joy of his art, could scarcely touch a surface without adorning it."[3] Suger, the Benedictine abbot and regent of France who supervised the construction of St. Denis in Paris, remarked about the magnificent furnishings of his church: "If the ancient law ordained that cups of gold should be used for libations, and to receive the blood of rams . . . how much rather should we devote gold, precious stones, and the rarest of materials to vessels designed to hold the blood of our Lord."[4]

We wonder why it was that the people of the Middle Ages gave themselves with such complete abandon to the building of tremendous churches. Men frequently spent an entire lifetime working on a bit of carved stone or years in the perfecting of a stained glass window. We must again realize that life, for the vast majority of these people, was frightfully colorless. There was nothing for them to see, little of the "wine which maketh glad the heart of man." Into that routine sordidness of daily living there came the transforming power of a cathedral. Here was the one opportunity to express joy and talent in the worship of God. They were not selfish in what they did. They were giving something to the world which would outlast their frail bodies. They were doing something which

(Continued on page 21)

[1] London: William Heinemann, Ltd.

[2] Used by permission.

[3] Will Durant, *The Age of Faith* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950). Used by permission.

[4] J. D. Addison, *Arts and Crafts in the Middle Ages* (New York: L. C. Page, subsidiary of Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1908). Used by permission.

Beginning at the End

By Ross M. Willis

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. . . . II Corinthians 1:8-9.

Although the Bible speaks with pronounced clarity on numerous issues, there remains one area where the most recent revisions have been unable to distill the confusion into clear-cut understanding. It is in this area of beginnings and endings. For throughout the pages of Holy Scripture, just when an individual or an incident seems to be standing on the threshold of some glorious new beginning, a shocking ending suddenly climaxes it all. And in reverse, surprisingly new beginnings are constantly arising out of blind alleys and dead-end streets. With little difficulty, one can roam through the pages of biblical history and gather armloads of fallen petals from withered lives that died in the flowering stage of existence, while he simultaneously scratches his head in amazement at seemingly dead incidents that miraculously came back to life. For in the Holy Bible, beginnings and endings come in the most unexpected places.

Consider some of the historical accounts of the Old Testament. The first book in the Bible has always been equated with beginning. The very word "Genesis" means "origin, source or begetting," and its opening words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," would certainly ascribe to it the position of curtain-raiser for the Hebrew-Christian faith, the starting point, the dawn of all that is known. Yet one need venture only a few pages into the book of Genesis to discover that just when all this optimistic beginning has been set into motion — there is a tragic ending. For man, created with the power to choose in his life, turns his back on the divine desires of God and chooses according to the lusts of human flesh. And because man will not recognize that the only way he can live in God's world is through his striving to do God's will, a curtain that marks a disastrous end is rung down on what appears to be only the beginning of the first act.

Fulfillment Denied

Or what of Moses? His hesitant acceptance of the leadership of a struggling tribe of Hebrew slaves under Egyptian rule, plus his dramatic escape from the armies of Pharaoh, plus his years of wandering in search of the "Promised Land," all seemed to add up to a glorious new beginning the day Moses stood atop Mount Nebo and viewed with his own eyes Canaan, the land God was giving his people. But for Moses, strangely enough, this ascent marked the end. For Moses would never enter the "Promised Land," but would die on Mount Nebo, viewing at a distance the prize for which he had given his life. What looked like a beginning really denoted an ending.

On the happier side of the ledger, view Elijah. His personality conflict with the wicked Jezebel and his thunderous victory over the prophets of Baal in that monumental demonstration on Mount Carmel caused him to flee miles into the wilderness and in sheer exhaustion drop to the ground and cry: "Take away my life, O Lord, for I am no better than my fathers." In effect he said, "It is over and I am defeated! For me, this is the end!" But what was the surprising response of God? "Elijah, rise and eat. It is not over. For there are seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed their knees to Baal. Elijah, this is not the end. It is only the beginning!"

Job, who has long been the patron saint of human suffering, in fitful confusion watched agony upon agony mount in his life, and while three frustrated counselors and his wife sought hopelessly to convince him that he should seek God's forgiveness for some unknown sin, Job held fast to faith in himself while watching family, friends and pos-

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sessions vanish from his life. Then, when it looked as though the end were so near that he could not go one step further in his terrible ordeal, the voice of God broke through with the assuring words: "No Job, you have not done wrong, and I will bless you with far more than you have ever known before." For Job, the end suddenly became a glorious new beginning.

Proud — and Woeful — Arrival

Not only in Hebrew history, but in New Testament Christianity, this business of endings and beginnings remains a confusing affair. If we accept the teachings of Jesus, we are appalled to discover that what we are so prone to feel is a delightful beginning is really a disastrous ending. It is Jesus who tells us that when an individual feels he has rounded out a career of being all set in life, that is when life is traditionally over. And just when we think we have spiritually arrived, that is when we are farthest from the Kingdom of God. In his parable of the foolish rich man, an individual who selfishly stored his bounteous possessions for a joyous retirement came only to have God say on the eve of his leisure, "Foolish man! For this night you shall die and then to whom shall all these things belong?" In the parable of the two men who went into the temple to pray, the proud Pharisee, feeling he possessed all righteousness, stood up and boldly thanked God he was not like other men. But his feeling of proud arrival woefully marked the end of his spiritual life.

Notice too, that in New Testament Christianity what often looks like the end is sometimes only the beginning. For in truth, there are countless New Testament examples that bring home the fact that when we think it is all over, it has just begun. What more striking example could be marched before our thinking than the death and resurrection of Jesus! As the Master walked out of Jerusalem's upper room, it looked as though the new community he had established between his disciples and himself was collapsing. After the crucifixion they were certain it was finished. Discouraged and defeated, some decided to go back to their fishing. But as dawn broke on that first glorious Easter, they realized what they had thought was the end was only the beginning. Jesus' resurrection proved that physical force could not destroy the spiritual fellowship he had restored. Christ had now been set loose in the world in a strange new way. And this was the same Christ who, in his earthly ministry, once remarked on beginnings and endings, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies it bears much fruit."

When that stern Paul of earlier years strode his way along the road that led from Jerusalem to Damascus he felt proud that his task of eradicating Christians was nearly ended. He had made life so uncomfortable in Jerusalem that most of them had fled. Now he would go to Damascus and complete another job. But along that well-known way Paul found not an end but a beginning. The beginning of a whole new life. The beginning of Christianity for him.

And this surprising adventure of finding new beginnings in events that seemed to mark endings continued to amaze Paul about the wonderful works of God. In the opening sentences of what has come to be known as his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul tells the members of the church at Corinth how it happened to him again. Hear his words: "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. . . ." The nature of Paul's Asian experience is unknown to us. The people at Corinth may have been familiar with it. It must have been some agonizing physical suffering. But whatever it was, this devastating experience, coupled with the strife and struggle of the early church at Corinth, came to Paul as a death blow from which he felt he could never recover. J. B. Phillips, in his *Letters to Young Churches,* translates Paul's words as: "We told ourselves this was the end." Then Paul suddenly realized that when there is nothing between man and darkness but God's mercy, this is where man truly finds God and learns his saving power. And this is not the end, but a glorious beginning of a new experience with God that we can never know when we rely only upon ourselves.

Our Only Hope

This is what makes the Bible a book of life. For although it was written centuries ago, the truths it has set down are eternal. It still gives us guidance regarding our hoped-for beginnings and our feared endings. It is still our only source of real light in dark times. And the lives of people in our present generation are strikingly similar to lives of biblical days. What man living today has become so immune to the tragedies of life that he has not seen all his hopes shattered and all his dreams come tumbling down just as he stood on the threshold of some long-planned beginning, some vibrant new start? Is there anyone who has not been confronted with this bewildering confusion of beginnings and endings? Not only biblical history, but *all* life is filled with moments when beginnings suddenly turn into endings. And humanity is composed of men and women who have experienced these perplexing turns of events.

Our only hope in such moments of despair is to grasp again the Christian truth that disastrous endings *can* become glorious new beginnings. This is the promise of Christ. It was the experience of

those who lived beside him. It can be the experience of those who know him today. For Christ teaches us to beware of our proud beginnings. They are too temporal, too flimsy in their construction. Strangely, Christ tells us to look to those moments when all life comes crashing down around us. Here we find the meaning of faith. Here, in our moments of despair and darkness, we often find God. Not that God delights in our misfortunes. Nothing could be farther from the truth! But when we realize that the situation is too towering to be met by our own inadequate strength, when we realize we are unequal to the task, when it looks like the end of it all, then, in our own weakness, we often find God and are strengthened by him.

The Truth of Faith

And this is the truth of faith. For it takes so little faith to glide through our exciting beginnings. Faith comes when, unequal to the task, we place our hope and our lives in God. And when we turn to God because we cannot single-handedly meet the anxiety of the sudden ending that darkens our lives and disappoints our hopes, then we understand the meaning of faith. For as Paul Tillich has observed: "Immediately seen, anxiety is the painful feeling of not being able to deal with the threat of a special situation."* This is when we must rely totally upon God. This is when God's strength is taken from the realm of words and placed in the realm of personal experience. And this can mark the beginning of a new way of life.

Paul sensed this truth when he wrote: "Why, we felt we had received the sentence of death. . . ." Then looking back on this thought with the perspective of God's strength, he added: "but that was to make us rely not upon ourselves but upon God who raises the dead. . . ." Paul realized that when he added up all the events in Asia to a sentence of death he left a vacuum in his calculations. He had forgotten to count God. He momentarily lost sight of the greatness of God. Then, coming to himself, Paul realized that it is in the endings of life that God shows us how truly great he is. For here God shows us that when we cannot rely upon ourselves, we can rely on his magnificent strength and love which triumphantly raise us from a dead ending to a new beginning of greater faith. This principle of resurrection must be at work in our daily lives. For even though our old self may die through sorrow, through misfortune, through peril of death, yet here is the exact point where our true self may come to life through dependence upon God, through a new understanding of the power of faith. There is no beginning like "Beginning at the End." It is here that we truly find God and find him in his strength.

* Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952). Used by permission.

Bezaleel

(Continued from page 18)

would be *le beau ideal,* dedicated to the God they hoped would smile with understanding upon them and accept their "sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving." The generations of artists and artisans gave their best. We have no record of their names, but the "fruit of their hands" will endure as long as men appreciate the beautiful. Yes, longer, for their work was done as an expression of faith in the God who will never die.

Whenever we see something of beauty in the midst of the commonplace, we know that the spirit of ancient Bezaleel still lives. How well I recall the trips I frequently made through the poor sections of Atlanta. One area was the Negro section and the housing conditions were fearful. I shall never forget one dwelling, the poorest of the lot. The wonder was that it had not fallen years ago. The rotting boards had never seen paint, and the roof was little more than a sieve. Yet, there in the window hung a red, white and blue service flag with a single gold star, and on the porch stood a pot of red geraniums. God gave us beauty that life might be possible in the midst of misery. He gave us the love of beauty that we might be somewhat above the animals. Indeed, there is the spark of Bezaleel in all of us.

Among the children of men, none lived closer to the daily routine than the Savior. He knew from personal experience the course of ordinary living. He did not enjoy wealth nor did he spend a lifetime amid grand temples. But of all the lives ever lived, Jesus of Nazareth knew more of real beauty than any mortal will ever know. He saw common lilies and spoke of their lasting loveliness. He took a simple supper of bread and wine and made it a Communion. He took a cross and transformed it into an instrument of redemption. He took a tomb and filled it with the light of Easter morning. He took a hell and made it a heaven. He takes a sinner and makes him a child of God.

During the horrible days of the Blitz, when London was being blasted nightly, a Sunday morning dawned. The night before had been one of the worst of the air raids. A particular section of the city had been badly hit, and on all sides there was ruin. At one corner there stood the remains of a once beautiful church. The building had been completely destroyed, only the altar remained. And there on the altar was a vase of fresh flowers — just placed, and candles had been lighted.

How easy it would have been for Bezaleel to have made everything with drab plainness. There are some poor souls who are willing to do just that. Then there are those blessed few who take the tragic and the commonplace and by the grace of God transform them into beauty.

Learning from the World

(Continued from page 6)

worship. Whatever can be done to improve this situation does not relax the burden placed upon the Sunday sermon: many people either get the faith there, or they don't get it at all.

Time expressed it this way: "Journalism has to talk to the physicist, his wife, his musician son and his political neighbor all at once . . . . *Time* . . . tries to sift, sort, condense and explain the news by this simple standard: How much effort can an ordinarily educated and intelligent man or woman be expected to use in understanding this story? It's no use saying that 80 million Americans ought to have a thorough grasp of physics by this time next year. Whether they ought to or not, they won't. Until they do, the journalist who wants to communicate anything about physics must continue to explain certain rudiments in terms that readers will understand. . . . *Time* aims to tell the man who came late to the ball game what the score is, who made the runs, and how the prospect looks. Nobody is on time for all the ball games."

Feeding the Faithful

If there is an upsurge in religious interest as so many claim, then the church is dealing with a lot of people "who came late to the ball game" and who want to know "what the score is." Perhaps this is the toughest job in preaching: to feed the faithful, and at the same time to arouse the interest of the curious and the indifferent. Some sermons sound and read as though they were written for ministers and theologians only. But the preacher's real skill is to state the same profound truths in compelling terms which not only help the Christian, but open the door for the conversion of the unbelieving.

Over the years, the editors of *Time* developed additional methods to enable the reader to digest what he read. Among them was the practice of "Telling the news as a narrative story. . . 'the basis of good narrative is to tell events 1) in the order in which they occur; 2) in the form in which an observer might have seen them — so that the readers can imagine themselves on the scene. A *Time* story must be completely organized from beginning to end; it must go from nowhere to somewhere and sit down when it arrives.' " Every preacher knows the power of a story. Jesus spoke in parables. How inexhaustible is Jesus' brief story of the prodigal son! The more we can clothe the message in a story, the better.

Time also stressed its research and checking system. "This grew in part out of the drive to get enough facts to 'make the news make sense' and in part out of writers' hunger for the kind of detail that would make a story 'live.' " Every minister needs that "hunger for the kind of detail" that makes a sermon live. The editors of *Time* developed the kind of filing system that helped them; the minister does the same. Note how James Stewart and Leslie Weatherhead allow one good illustration to make the point specific and compelling. A leading theologian has commented on his distress in finding so many sermons which simply re-echo his thoughts without clothing them in the homiletical form which embodies the kind of detail which brings the truth alive.

Undoubtedly there are many pitfalls in setting up the comparison between the job of preaching and *Time*'s job of reporting. This article is not presuming to make reporters out of preachers. Nevertheless, there is pay dirt here for anyone who is attempting to communicate, and it is validated by being the method of a magazine that is remarkably successful in getting its story across. "Success" may have become a nasty word in the preacher's vocabulary today, but a man who is commissioned to "preach the Word," and who has dedicated his life to that task is committed to do the best he can. If the world around him does a better job of getting through to his people than he does, then it is time for him to learn to do what the world does so well.

All these things we already know. A fresh reminder from a successful secular source may help us put what we know into practice. Surely our great need is to say clearly what seems to be so clear in our minds. One truth that gets across is better than a hundred that we haven't been able to convey to our listeners. One truth that hits the target is better than a hundred that go wild. Like it or not, the burden rests on the preacher, and not on the ignorance or indifference of the listener. We can't use the excuse that we aren't Buttricks or Fosdicks. The people know this and so do we. But they do have a right to expect us to be clear and orderly enough so they can follow and digest what we say. We can learn from the world, that the world may learn from the Word.

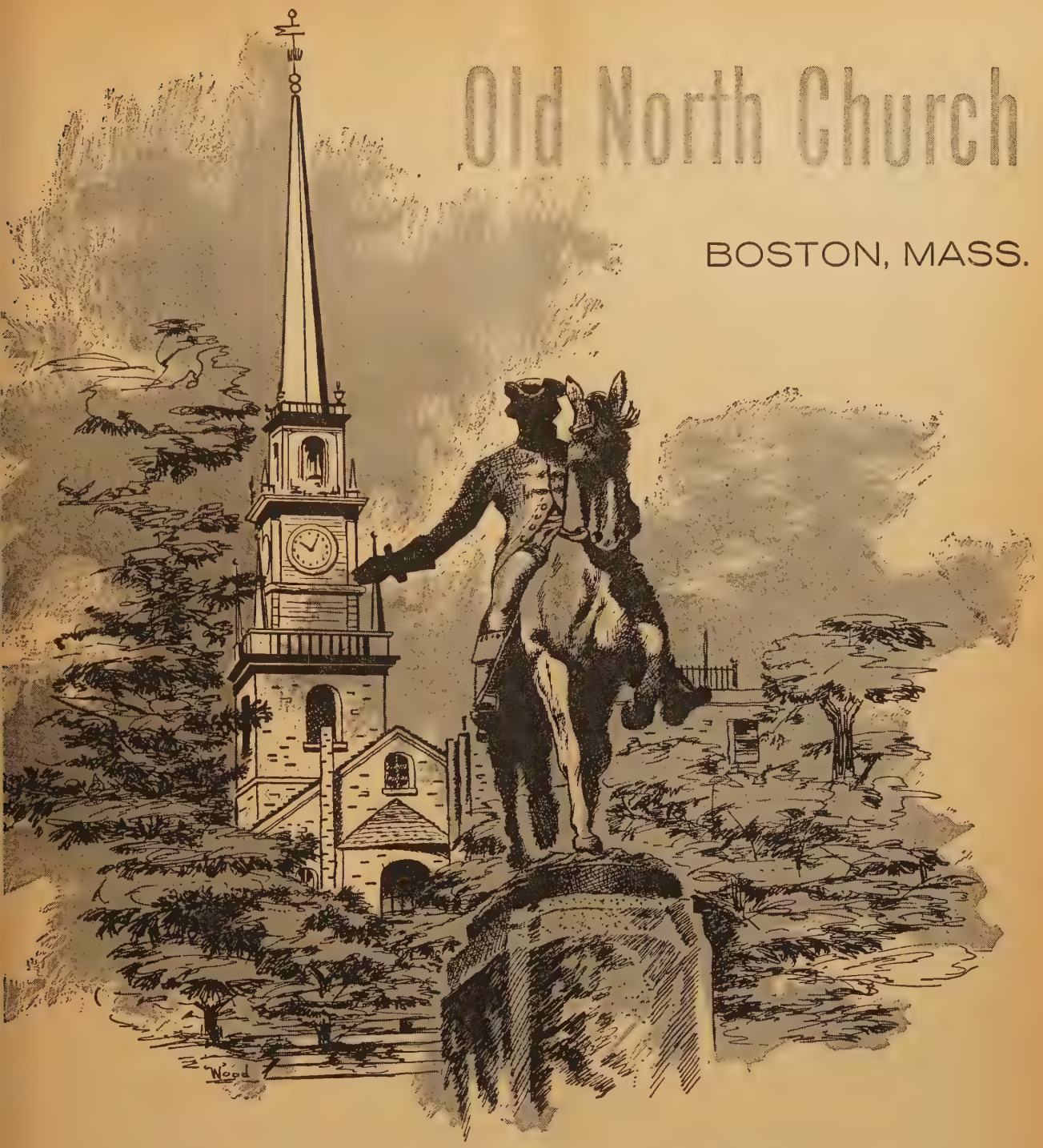
Fine Lines from a Prayer

HOLY Father, may we glorify thy name by disciplining our lives to the doing of those things which we feel thou wouldst prefer: the practice of humility, the willful absence of greed, the real presence in our lives of sensitivity and concern for all thy children. May thy name be hallowed as we who seek to serve thy will even minutely reflect thy goodness. Amen. — *Clifton Bryan Kruse, Jr., student, Boston University School of Theology, Boston, Massachusetts.*

Famous Church Buildings in America—number 1 of a series

Old North Church

BOSTON, MASS.



One if by land, two if by sea—here in the tower of the Old North Church Paul Revere saw the signal that sent the United States into its struggle for independence. This is Boston's oldest existing place of worship with its first stone laid on April 15, 1723. A handsome 11x14 reproduction of this church, lithographed on Parchment like paper for framing will be sent to you from Ministers Life . . . write today and enclose 25¢ to cover mailing.

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The Person and the Church

By J. N. Kelly

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.
Matthew 5:41.

AN editorial in a church paper listed the organizations that the typical American citizen joins. The editorial ended with the fateful words, "and he also joins some church." So the act of becoming a church member is just one among many acts of joining, which taken together, constitute a pattern of affiliation. The question arises, Is the religious act of the person merely an act of conforming?

Here one is tempted to sweep the question under the proverbial rug and leave it there. But for better or for worse the Christian community has never shunned probings. The honesty of the Christian believer requires him to face the searching and embarrassing enigmas of his generation. For this reason we must attempt to answer the question we have posed as to the genuine nature of the individual's religious acts.

One must candidly admit that conformity factors may be present in every individual's religious decisions. The complexity of our culture and the massive efforts toward regimentation elsewhere in the world tend to elevate conformism to the status of a principle. Freud supplied the philosophic basis for the apostles of conformity in his concept of adjustment. The Christian is a part of his culture and can hardly escape the domination exercised by socializing customs.

Several social scientists have alerted us to the dangers present in the slow attrition of the individual's freedom. David Reisman points to the multitude of the "other directed" persons. William H. Whyte examines the profile of the "organization man" who fears nonconformity like the plague. In his *Escape from Freedom* Erich Fromm argues that the individual in our society will submit to any tyranny that promises to deliver him from the dreadful responsibilities of freedom. Freedom is the companion of loneliness and modern man seems unable to endure loneliness. Hannah Ahrendt, Vance Packard and Jacques Barzun state in crisp sentences our society's imposing threat to the individual. The gray blanket covers the whole of life. There is a sameness woven into the texture of contemporary life and it invades the soul of man. Like the rains of God conformism is no respecter of persons. It affects the Christian and the non-Christian alike. In fact, there is some indication that the gravest threat to the sanctity of the individual comes not from society but from the church. This assertion needs clarification.

Problem of Decision

The church is at the pinnacle of success. It is abundant in numbers and rich with resources. The organizational structure of American religious life has endowed the church with incredible efficiency. Techniques of salesmanship and persuasion developed by the business community have been baptized into the church. Ministers are trained in many disciplines and hold capabilities for achievement that compare favorably with other professions. Against this array of competence and organization the individual may feel it the better part of valor to run up the white flag and step in line. Max Lerner recently criticized our Christian culture at this point. He fears that we may be loudly rather than deeply committed to the freedom of the individual. In his book *Theology of Culture* Paul Tillich brings this problem of the genuineness of the individual's religious decision into focal clarity.

Dr. Tillich comments on the matter of communicating the Christian message as follows: He says the question cannot be, "How do we communicate the Gospel so that others will accept it? To communicate the Gospel means putting it before the people so that they are able to decide for or against it. The Christian Gospel is a matter of decision. It is to be accepted or rejected."* Now if one reads these insights correctly the church must lay aside any coercive techniques that invade the sacred shrine of the individual. It must present the gospel as a matter of genuine decision and must respect the inner sacredness of the decision-making process. This is the area of the burning bush where one moves with humility and awe.

How did Jesus feel about preserving the authentic decision-making right of the individual? His feelings were deep and often expressed, and they were, without reservation, for the protection of the individual's right to choose among life's opportunities. Perhaps nowhere does Jesus more strongly emphasize the consequential value of the person and his decisions than he does in a short passage of Scripture from the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew 5:38-42 are propositions that are utterly absurd, from the viewpoint of society. They make eminent good sense when read against the background of the imaginative decisions that only a person can make. Let us look at these verses.

"You have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you that you resist not evil." "You have heard that it hath been said" is the dictate of society. The criminals, the recalcitrants and the misfits must be repressed by the massive front of standardized social pressure. When society is challenged it responds through the protective measures learned in the generations of past history. "But I say unto you" is the answer of the conscience and wisdom of the individual. Jesus makes the daring assumption that the individual can be placed over against the customs of the societal system. The new solution to old problems is born within the individual's nonconformism. This is why it is of grave importance to preserve the individual's decision-making capacity. The Kingdom of God depends on the insights that grow out of a creative

---

J. N. Kelly *is pastor of The Harrodsburg Christian Church, Harrodsburg, Kentucky, which is his denomination's (Disciples of Christ) oldest living congregation. Mr. Kelley has served churches in Aylmer, Ontario, LaGrange and Irvine, Kentucky, and Shelbyville, Tennessee, and was a chaplain in China for two years during World War II. This address is the outgrowth of some conscientious probing by his evangelism committee into the success of their recent visitation campaign.*

* Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, edited by Robert C. Kimball (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959). Used by permission.

rsonal response to the stereotyped ucture of culture. Only the person n choose to turn the other cheek.

"Whosoever shall smite thee on thy ght cheek turn to him the other so." This, more than the other state- ents, reveals the depths of the indi- dual's own choices. To strike back self-defense is a natural right. This instinctual response to a challenge id, like crimes of passion, finds easy irdon. The Kinsey approach to orality sanctifies the activities of the itural person but, because of the eight of this argument, this becomes ecisely the area where the individual n rise above the levels of social orality. He alone can choose to act ways beyond the accepted. Here gain is the opportunity for the per- nal decision that allows the person become more moral than his society. is by an act of the person that high- t morality is served.

After Conformity

"And whosoever shall compel thee go with him a mile, go with him vain." Jesus saw that there would e matters in which the individual ould find it necessary to conform. his is the first mile traveled under mpulsion. This refers, of course, to ie right of the Roman soldier to re- uire a Jew to carry military gear for specified distance. For the first mile ie Jew was a slave bearing the rievous weight of the military occupa- on. It was, however, at the end of ie first mile that slavery ended and, or those who had the insight, the air f freedom existed at the beginning f the second. What the Master was aying here was that after the compul- ions there are boundary situations eyond which one can regain direction f his own life. These borders are rossed by those who decide to do just hat.

We do well to guard the genuineness f the person's religious acts. If they re tokens of conformity they are de- oid of religious meaning. The history f our Christian faith is grandly illus- rated with those solitary individuals who have made choices that society an hardly face. One elderly lady, com- enting on her membership of seventy ears in the church, said, "My church embership has never been a matter f the passage of time; it has been ather a series of eventful events."

In the early 1500's the power of the Holy Roman Empire assembled to deal vith a monk whose troubled con- cience had become an issue. The epresentative of the Empire directed question to the monk, "I ask you, Martin, do you or do you not repudi- te your books and the errors which hey contain?" The lonely monk arose nd as someone said, God spoke Ger- nan that day. "I cannot and I will ot recant anything, for to go against onscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen." Here is the uthentic decision of the individual. The whole Reformation testifies to the ower of such personal choice.

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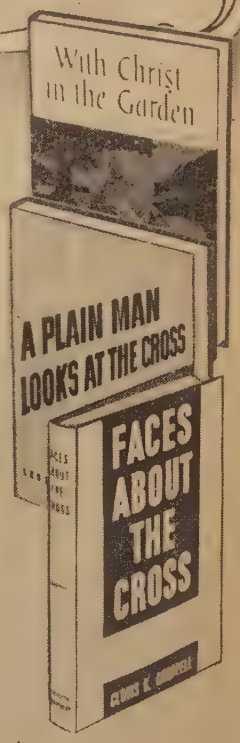

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Book Reviews

ROYAL SACRAMENT: *The Preacher and His Message. By Ronald A. Ward. Marshall, Morgan & Scott. 12s.6d.*

IN this profound and profitable, charming and alarming book, Professor Ward provides patent proof that the age of the preacher is by no means over. A *real* preacher will always get a hearing, *i.e.*, a preacher who loves and serves God and passionately wants other men to serve and love God, who sincerely holds the truth he preaches, who is identified with Him whose herald he is, one with Him whose bread he breaks. Reality in preaching is admittedly an end to be striven for, and the author sets out to investigate, with considerable and commendable success, how it comes to be attained or missed.

With distinguished scholarship and a gently glowing enthusiasm, Professor Ward studies the position of the preacher of today, examines his problems and weighs well his opportunities. Readers will appreciate the interesting, entertaining, educational and evangelical value of such a book as this, particularly in such tangled times as these.

We are reminded "of the important place which words have, especially the words of Holy Scripture, in the life and work of the preacher." He writes as one who relishes Greek words, especially New Testament Greek words, for he makes many of them really come alive. "When we read and reread the Greek Testament," he informs us, "the Word of God 'comes' to us: images and pictures pass before our minds which otherwise we should never have seen; aorists glitter like diamond pinpoints; imperfects unveil one procession after another; perfects bring their action right up to the doorstep of the present moment. Technical terms call up a whole host of memories, and even the comparison of Greek word with Greek word may sometimes set the pulses tingling and drive us to seek a pulpit (if we have not one of our own) from which we may make known the treasure we have discovered. Texts 'flash' for us on the wave length of our own interest, and we find that God is speaking to us and giving us a message which we must proclaim. Like the ancient prophet, we start from the natural and we find the spiritual. We start with the 'ordinary,' with words, and we find the Word."

One thing must never be allowed to happen: those who are set apart to preach the Christian gospel must never be guilty of dealing in any age with life on a more shallow level than is occupied by the grave literature of man. It will be a shameful situation if from behind the pulpit desk we are talking trivial and temporary things, when the Spirit of God is agitating man outside the church to lonely and awful depths. By all means it must be brought home to the hearts and minds of our hearers in these days that forgiveness of sins — a matter which they, largely with our encouragement, take so much for granted as the kind of natural way, so natural that it seems otiose and unnecessary to make much of it — is something which is not possible and is not accomplished, unless as the consequence of an agony in man and of an agony in God.

In the fourth chapter of his book, entitled, "The Preacher and His General Literature" Professor Ward shows, in a skillful and scholarly manner, how general literature has a service to render to the gospel. "It is remarkable," he writes, "how much light is thrown on scripture by ordinary literature, prose, poetry and drama." "It is ministerial," he concludes. "It is a servant. Then the servant of the Word may himself use that lesser servant for the glory of Him who is Master and Lord."

Every theological tutor would do well to procure this book for the sake of its tenth chapter. Dr. Ward is one of the few among us, it would seem, who has been giving sustained thought to the work of training modern young men for the Christian ministry. Professor Ward proceeds to raise "the whole question of the theological course, the curriculum." He has many pertinent points to make in the matter of subjects treated in theological colleges — Liturgics, Pastoralia, Homiletics, Old and New Testaments, Systematic Theology, Church History and Philosophy.

All *this* common cleric asks is that some perceptive and enterprising American publisher will, as soon as is reasonably possible, bring out the book here. Then many American preachers in and already out of seminary, like their British and Canadian counterparts, will soon be high over their ears and head in debt to its able and admirable author. — *Johnstone G. Patrick, First Presbyterian Church, Sayre, Pennsylvania.*

SERMONS IN STORIES FOR CHILDREN. *By Graham R. Hodges. Abingdon. $1.75.*

GOOD books of story-sermons for children are not easy to find, chiefly because few ministers claim to be sufficiently expert in the art to risk putting their material in print or to discover a publisher who is begging for such copy. Graham Hodges, who is the minister of Emmanuel Congregational Church, Watertown, New York, has written forty-two story-sermons and in comparison with the average type he has done unusually well. His sources are history, legend and everyday life, and he employs all three with skill and effectiveness. His success comes from his awareness of those qualities necessary to communicating effectively with children: He treats them as real people and gives no indication of condescending to "little children weak." He never fails to appeal to their imagination and their sense of wonder. These talks are informative and invariably interesting. Although the relationship to the Scripture text is usually somewhat contrived, each story in the main defines a Christian ideal in a manner so vivid that in all likelihood it will stick. Leaders of junior congregations will find useful material and suggestions in these pages. — *Donald Macleod, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey.*

IS DEATH THE END? *By Carroll E. Simcox. Seabury. $2.25.*

HERE is an attempt to set forth the doctrine of eternal life in simple terms. The author, rector of St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Tampa, Florida, does not presume to shed new light upon an age-old theme, but states with a clear, fresh style the church's perennial answer in Jesus Christ. One is attracted immediately by his approach to the problem of spiritual survival beyond death; he begins with God rather than man. Then he discusses the difference between the Greek concept of immortality and the Christian idea of resurrection which vindicated the quality and indestructibility of that eternal life which can begin in us now. His chapters on Hell and Heaven are very sane and round out the pattern of his discussion. This is a good book for laymen not only for its clarity and simplicity, but because Dr. Simcox faces up to many

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of the usual questions raised by the man in the street. Preachers too will spend a rewarding hour reading it and sensing the art of teaching a great Christian doctrine effectively. — *Donald Macleod.*

FIRST QUESTIONS ON THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT. *By Thomas E. Powers. Harper. $4.00.*

THIS volume is the product of wide reading and of careful collating of devotional materials. Its author, Thomas E. Powers — an advertising man and free-lance writer — has intended that this book be used as a guide or working aid for those approaching the adventure of the spiritual life for the first time. *First Questions on the Life of The Spirit* is a kind of laboratory volume in four sections in each of which a crucial question is faced: "Does God Really Exist?" "How Practical Is the Spiritual Life?" "After Death, What?" "Can We Know God's Will?" Then follow fifteen pages of bibliography which include a useful listing of devotional and theological titles from various religious traditions.

In preparing this book the author was guided by a questionnaire which was circulated among laymen to discover what are the greatest concerns in the area of religion. Whatever this strategy may have contributed to the shape of this volume, the result contains an inevitable weakness — the book is patchy. Moreover, the author's tendency to draw upon so many sources, both pseudo-religious and philosophical, creates a sort of devotional syncretism which lacks the clear central thrust of a more balanced and definitely Christian approach. Also, writers in this field ought to realize that "down-to-earthiness" is not, and never has been, the primary characteristic of the great devotional classics of Christendom. This is a very full treatise on a spiritual theme but it is too much of a collation of comparative religion, Peale-ism, and free-lance psychology — the usual ingredients of Madison Avenue piety. — *Donald Macleod.*

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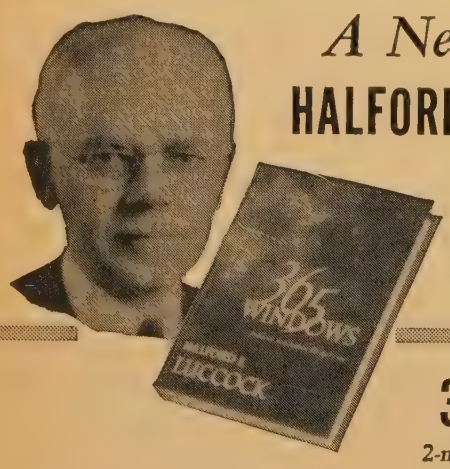

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NEW FRONTIERS FOR SPIRITUAL LIVING. *By Charles A. Behnke. Concordia. $2.00.*

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I BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH. *Elmer G. Homrighausen. Abingdon. $1.50.*

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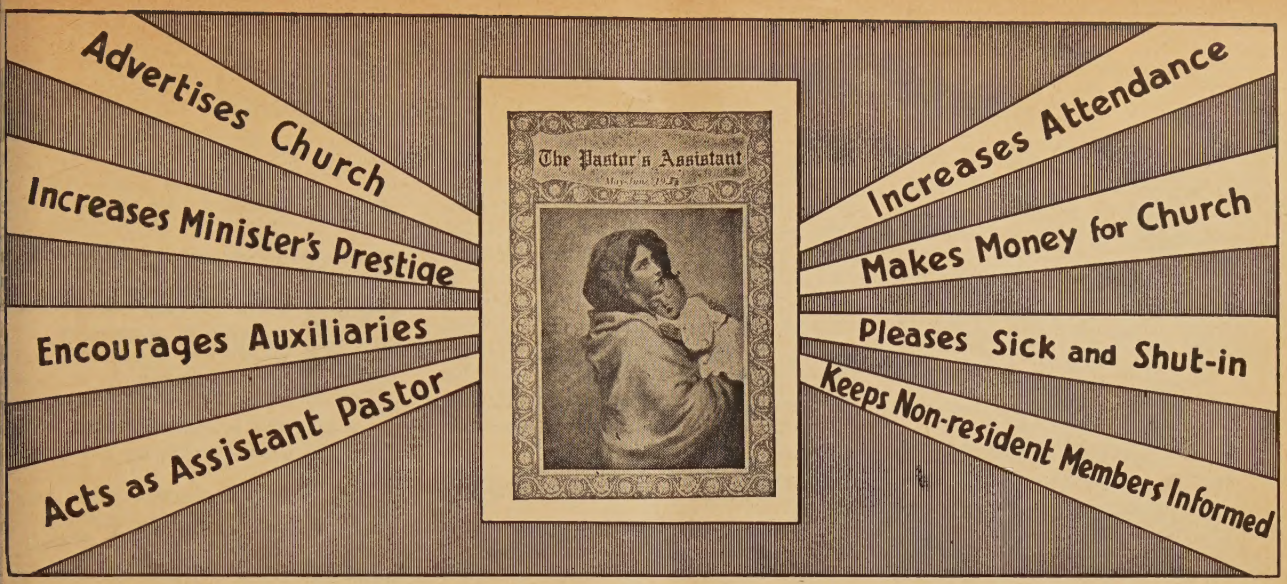

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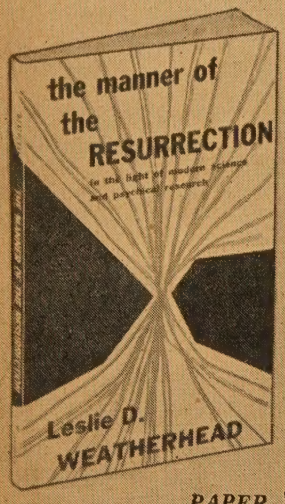

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I Believe in Man. *By Frederick Keller Stamm. Abingdon. $1.50.*

THIS is a simple, nontechnical volume setting forth a view of man as essentially a religious person, and then showing what this understanding of man means in terms of daily living.

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> What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! in form, in moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!

Stamm's chief indictment against man is that he does not know his own self. He does not know that he is a little world reflecting the larger world in miniature. "If he is ever to come to that place, he will have to assert the dignity of his own humanity." If it is true that man was born with some sin in him, it is no less true that most men were born with a lot of good in them too. One may doubt that this book would be required reading at Basel! — *Duane A. Walker.*

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Pulpit Calendar

Jan. 1 — New Year's Day.
Jan. 3 — Second Sunday in Christmastide.
Jan. 3-10 — Universal Week of Prayer.
Jan. 5 — Twelfth Night: Epiphany Eve.
Jan. 6 — Epiphany.
Jan. 10 — 1st Sunday after Epiphany.
Jan. 17 — Missionary Day.
Jan. 17-23 — Church and Economic Life Week.
Jan. 24 — 3rd Sunday after Epiphany.
Jan. 24-31 — Youth Week.
Jan. 31 — 4th Sunday after Epiphany.
Feb. 2 — Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.
Feb. 7 — The Transfiguration.
Feb. 14 — Race Relations Sunday.
Feb. 21 — Universal Day of Prayer for Students.
Feb. 21-28 — Brotherhood Week.
Mar. 2 — Ash Wednesday.
Mar. 4 — World Day of Prayer.
Mar. 6 — 1st Sunday in Lent.
Mar. 13 — 2nd Sunday in Lent.
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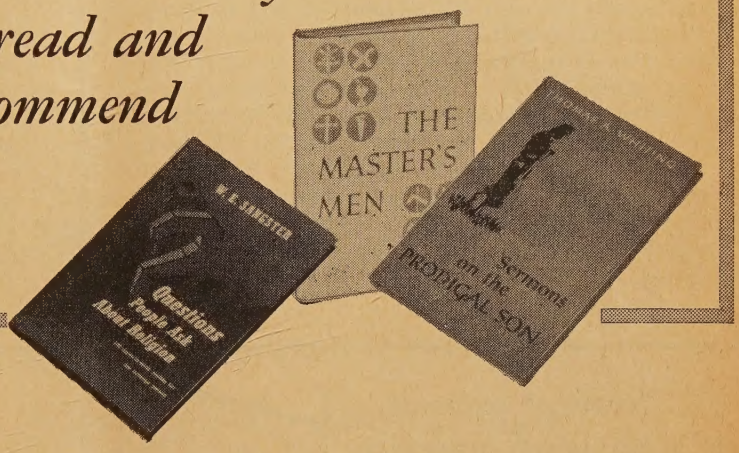

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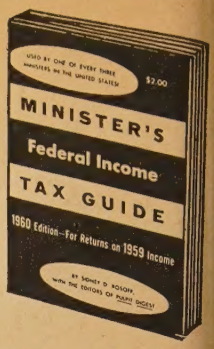

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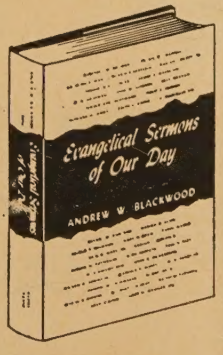

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